

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MT, UK

SUBJ: MINTOFF ON BASE AGREEMENT

REF: VALLETTA 0911

1. FOLLOWING P.M. MINTOFF'S STATEMENTS ON HIS EUROPEAN AND MIDDLE EAST TRAVELS, OPPOSITION LEADER BORG OLIVIER AND SHADOW FINMIN FELICE PROVOKED HIM INTO SAYING THAT EITHER GOM OR HMG UNILATERALLY COULD REVOKE THE BASE AGREEMENT. IN RESPONSE TO A B.O. QUESTION WHETHER HE HAD RAISED THE DEFENSE REVIEW WITH BRITISH OFFICIALS, MINTOFF SAID THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAD EVERY RIGHT TO REVIEW ITS DEFENSE EXPENDITURES, BUT SINCE IT HAD NOT BEEN CARRIED OUT AS YET, HE COULD NOT SEE HOW HE COULD ASK THEM ABOUT IT.

2. HE DENIGRATED ARRANGEMENTS WITH UK UNDER THE NATIONALIST ADMINISTRATION AND SAID THAT THE PRESENT AGREEMENT COULD NOT BE ONLY PARTLY KEPT. IT HAD TO BE HONORED IN FULL OR NOT AT ALL. THE AGREEMENT LAID DOWN THE RENT TO BE PAID, THE BUILDINGS AND LAND BRITISH FORCES CAN OCCUPY, THE NUMBER OF

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PERSONS THEY EMPLOY, ETC. IF THEY (HMG) HONOR THE AGREEMENT,

EVERYTHING WOULD CONTINUE AS IT IS. IF NOT, THE MALTESE WOULD DISCOVER HOW RIGHT GOM WAS WHEN IT SAID, "BETTER NOW, BECAUSE WHEN THEY (HMG) NO LONGER NEED US, THEY WILL LEAVE." IN RESPONSE TO FELICE INTERVENTION, MINTOFF SAID, "WE COULD BREAK THE AGREEMENT, BUT THAT WOULDN'T BE A NICE THING TO DO. THEY WOULD NOT DECLARE WAR AGAINST US IF WE DID IT."

3. MINTOFF CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT SUCH QUESTIONS WERE UNCALLED FOR BECUASE "THE GOM AND PEOPLE OF MALTA ARE CONVINCED THAT BRITIAN WILL HONOR THE AGREEMENT."

4. COMMENT: THE FOREGOING COMMENT IS ABOUT AS WARM A STATEMENT ON UK/MALTA RELATIONS AS MINTOFF IS LIKELY TO MAKE AND BODES WELL FOT THE CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENCE OF BRITISH FORCES ON MALTA WITHOUT SERIOUSLY DIFFICULTIES.GETZ

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